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Letter dated 24 February 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The date of 26 February 2005 will mark the thirteenth anniversary of the Khojaly genocide — a bloody crime against humanity committed by Armenian nationalists, the monstrous slaughter of the peaceful inhabitants of the town of Khojaly.

On the night of 25 to 26 February 1992, armed forces of the Republic of Armenia committed an unthinkable, brutal crime. They mercilessly massacred hundreds of helpless, innocent people. They did not spare even children, women or the elderly. As a result of the atrocities, 613 civilians, including old people, women and children, were murdered, 1,000 were disabled, and 1,275 persons were taken prisoner and subjected to unprecedented torture and humiliation. To this day, the fate of 150 persons is not known.

Various witnesses reported horrifying details of the massacre. The late Azerbaijani journalist Chingiz Mustafayev, who was the first to film the aftermath of the massacre, wrote an account of what he saw: "Some children were found with severed ears; the skin had been cut from the left side of an elderly woman's face, and men had been scalped."

The Russian human rights group Memorial reported that "scores of the corpses bore traces of profanation. Doctors on a hospital train in Aghdam noted no less than four corpses that had been scalped and one that had been beheaded ... and one case of live scalping".

Human Rights Watch called the tragedy at the time "the largest massacre to date in the conflict".

The *New York Times* wrote about truckloads of bodies and described acts of scalping.

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The Khojaly massacre was the culmination of hostilities against the civilian population. "Hundreds, possibly thousands, were slaughtered in a turkey shoot of civilians and their handful of defenders. There were 477 that (one) day, a number that did not include those missing and presumed dead" — according to accounts of those events by a freelance journalist, Thomas Goltz.[1]

As despicable as it may sound, the reason behind this unseen savagery is revealed by Defence minister of Armenia Serge Sarkissian in his interview to British journalist Tomas de Waal: "Before Khojaly the Azerbaijanis thought that ... the Armenians were people who could not raise their hands against the civilian population. We were able to break that [stereotype]."[2] No comments.

Regrettably, the international community's response was not adequate. Recently, the matter has been raised in the United States House of Representatives. It was exactly this insufficient reaction to which Congressman Dan Burton of Indiana drew the attention of his colleagues in his statement on 17 February 2005: "Ironically and tragically, none of these Members has ever once mentioned the ethnic cleansing carried out by the Armenians during the Armenia-Azerbaijan war which ended a mere decade ago." He concluded with the following appeal: "This is not the ringing condemnation that the survivors of Khojaly deserve, but it is an important first step by an international community that has too long been silent on this issue. Congress should take the next step and I hope my colleagues will join me in standing with Azerbaijanis as they commemorate the tragedy of Khojaly. The world should know and remember."

This year, as they have every year since the massacre, the residents of Khojaly, who managed to survive the massacre, issued an appeal to the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe, the text of which I have the honour to submit to you, and patiently expect them to take appropriate steps to hold the perpetrators of this crime responsible.

The date of 26 February was proclaimed as Day of Khojaly Genocide and National Mourning by a decision of the Milli Majlis (Parliament) of the Republic of Azerbaijan. A minute of silence is kept every year on 26 February at 5 p.m. to honour the memory of the victims of the Khojaly genocide.

The moral consciousness of the world demands that this massacre be adequately accounted for as an act of genocide and that its victims be remembered just as those of Baby Yar, Khatyn and Srebrenica.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under item 163 of the agenda, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yashar **Aliyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

[1] **Thomas Goltz**, *Azerbaijan diary*, p. 150.
[2] **Tomas de Waal**, *Black Garden* (NYU Press, 2003), p. 85.

Annex to the letter dated 24 February 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Appeal of refugees from Khodjaly to the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

The aim of our appeal to such influential organizations as the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, is to bring the truth on the genocide which was committed in February 1992 in Khodjaly of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan, to the attention of the world community and to call for making a legal-political assessment of this crime.

Everybody, who has an idea of the history of Azerbaijan, knows that Khodjaly, a settlement founded 3,000 years ago in the mountainous part of Karabakh, is one of the oldest settlements of Azerbaijanis. Rare exhibits and unique historical monuments revealed by archaeological excavation are vivid proof.

In order to realize their plan of creating "Great Armenia", Armenians, who erected a monument in 1978 on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of their movement to Azerbaijan from Iran, had pursued a consistent policy of aggression against Azerbaijan in the last two centuries, with the assistance of their foreign accomplices, and committed such crimes against humanity as terrorism, omnicide, deportation and genocide.

Numerous historical documents prove that the millions of Azerbaijanis suffering ethnic cleansing and genocide in 1905-1907, 1918-1920, 1948-1953 in their historical ethnic territories were murdered in massive numbers and obliged to flee from their native lands.

Finally, Armenian separatism and groundless territorial claims against Azerbaijan were raised again in 1988 and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict started. Two hundred fifty-thousand Azerbaijanis to the last man, were deported from Armenia, and hundreds of civic persons were brutally killed. Consequently, Armenia became a mono-ethnic country, which was a long-cherished dream of the Armenians.

Unfortunately, the former Soviet leadership and civilized world remained indifferent to this conflict, the barbarity of the Armenians and the terrible plight of the Azerbaijanis. Encouraged by this indifference, Armenians successfully committed historical crime and genocide against Azerbaijanis. Twenty per cent of the territory of Azerbaijan, including seven regions around Nagorno-Karabakh, was occupied by Armenian armed forces, more than 1 million Azerbaijanis expelled from native lands, tens of thousands of people killed, disabled and taken hostage. Hundreds of settlements, thousands of houses, education and health institutions, historical-cultural monuments, mosques, temples, and cemeteries were destroyed, once more proving Armenian vandalism.

In the first years of the conflict, the tragedy and terrorism committed by Armenians against the Azerbaijani population of Karabakh in the villages of Kerkijahan, Mesheli, Koushjular, Karadaghly and Aghdaban, and finally the

Khodjaly genocide, are the historical stigma of the "suffering and miserable" Armenians.

We bring with regret to the attention of the world community that the Khodjaly genocide was another link in the chain of great human calamities of the twentieth century such as Khatyn, Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Songmi.

On 26 February 1992, Armenian armed forces, with the direct participation of the Motorized Infantry Regiment 366 of the former Soviet Union in Khankendi (Stepanakert), attacked Khodjaly from five directions. At that very time, 3,000 people remained in the town. Armenians had been keeping Khodjaly under complete siege during the previous four months. The population was in need of food and medicines. There were a number of sick, wounded, aged men, women and children in the town.

Armenians, with the assistance of their foreign accomplices, destroyed and burned the town with the heavy military equipment of Regiment 366. Innocent people were murdered, with children, women, the elderly and the sick being subject to awful tortures and mutilation. Armenians committed a very grave historical crime — the Khodjaly genocide against the Azerbaijanis at the end of the twentieth century, before the eyes of civilized humankind. The aim of this action was the omnicide of Khodjaly residents. The majority of the residents remained alive only accidentally to witness the tragedy.

In this genocide, 613 peaceful residents were murdered and 1,275 taken hostage. The fate of 150 people is still unknown. One thousand people were disabled, with 83 children, 106 women and 70 elderly among the killed. Seventy-eight of the mutilated were minor boys and girls.

As a result of this military-political crime, members of six families were murdered to the last man, 25 children lost both parents, and 130 children lost one of them. Fifty-six people were burned with special cruelty, tortured, beheaded, and blinded, ears, noses cut, pregnant women bayoneted.

It is difficult to imagine that this brutality and savageness, not having any match in history, was committed by human beings at the end of the twentieth century, before the eyes of humankind. But humanity should be aware that the perpetrators of this crime, committed against not only Azerbaijanis but all of mankind, are the "suffering and miserable" Armenians.

For 13 years we, the residents of Khodjaly, living the life of refugees, have appealed to all peaceful peoples and international organizations of the world, with heartache mixed with high hope. We beg you not to remain indifferent and neglect our sufferings and all the tragedy resulting from the Armenian military aggression. We do not believe that such authoritative organizations as the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as powerful nations, are incapable of bringing Armenia, a State that defies the civilized international community, to justice.

We are convinced that the world community, condemning the military aggression of Azerbaijan by Armenia, will assist in restoration of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, the return of more than a million refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes, and the solution to the Armenia-Azerbaijan

conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh in a peaceful manner and in consonance with historical and political justice.

We, the residents of Khodjaly, met with profound grief the awful act of terrorism committed on 11 September 2001, which resulted in thousands of casualties. That terrible human tragedy took us back to the gory events of 26 February 1992. We, along with many thousands of Azerbaijani refugees, have suffered similar tragedy ourselves, and still live in miserable and severe conditions in tents, coaches, underground caves and vaults.

We, having suffered one of the most terrible tragedies of the twentieth century, call the peoples of the world to struggle together for peace and order. We, sounding the alarm to all international organizations, peaceful and authoritative nations, call upon humankind to mobilize to settle all conflicts on the Earth and to struggle for a free and prosperous community of people living in peace and order!

We, the witnesses of Khodjaly genocide, who miraculously outlived the tragedy, condemning all kinds of genocide and terrorism against humanity, once more appeal with high hope to the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the civilized world community, and call for rendering a legal and political assessment of the Khodjaly genocide.

The appeal was adopted at the general gathering of refugees from Khodjaly region on 19 February 2005.